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SUBJECT: SECOND ANNIVERSARY OF HRANT DINK'S MURDER,
AMBASSADOR CALLS ON RAKEL DINK

REF: A. 08 ISTANBUL 370

[1](#)B. 09 ANKARA 64

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. Consul General and other consulate officers attended a number of memorial events commemorating the second anniversary of Hrant Dink's murder in Istanbul on January 19, 2007. During a January 22 courtesy call by Ambassador Jeffrey, Hrant Dink's widow Rakel and family lawyer Fethiye Cetin explained their concerns about the investigation into Hrant Dink's death and likely involvement of "deep state" actors in organizing the murder. Rakel Dink joined others when she noted that Dink's death has the potential of being a "cornerstone" for the resolution of murders committed by the Deep State and reconciliation between Turkey and Armenia. The trial of 18 suspects is ongoing; investigations into the complicity of security officials in Trabzon, Istanbul, and Samsun are progressing slowly; and Dink family lawyers have appealed to the European Court of Human Rights on several occasions. End summary.

Commemorations and the Ambassador's Courtesy Call

[1](#)2. (SBU) On January 22 Ambassador Jeffrey and Consul General Wiener called on the Dink family at the Hrant Dink International Foundation in Istanbul to extend condolences on the second anniversary of Dink's death. Family lawyer Fethiye Cetin was also present at the meeting. The "Friends of Hrant Dink" and human rights organizations organized several demonstrations and memorial events in recognition of the two year anniversary on January 19. Members of the mission had attended a gathering in front of Agos newspaper, and the Consul General, PolOff, and APAO attended a memorial concert on the evening of January 19. Hrant Dink's widow Rakel Dink expressed her hope that the new U.S. administration will foster a more democratic and peaceful world, one which exposes "deep state gangs" and promotes human rights.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Rakel Dink emphasized to the Ambassador that the murder was unexpected despite the threats the Dink family received at the time because of Turkey's development and future prospects. "Why would they cut their own rope to hang themselves?" She expressed hope that Hrant's death would allow an understanding of the operation of the Deep State and those who killed him, referring to his death as a cornerstone to such an investigation. However, Rakel Dink told the Ambassador, "We stay here because we love this country. We are part of this country. But can you tell us, are we safe here now?"

[1](#)4. (SBU) The second anniversary of Hrant Dink's murder prompted a great deal of soul-searching in the media. According to "Hurriyet Daily News" journalist Vercihan Ziflioglu, Dink's death caused the Turkish public to "wonder

about the Armenian people who they had been living beside for hundreds of years, and also to question the past." Conservative columnist Abdurrahman Dilipak of "Vakit" said Dink's murder had a positive impact: "Instead of being a cause of new hostility between the two societies, Hrant's blood provided an opportunity to decipher the deep state." Other intellectuals and columnists labeled Dink's death a "milestone" in the path for a solution to the problem of antipathy between Armenians and Turks and the Deep State and modern Turkey.

Current Case Status - Many Trials and Investigations

¶5. (SBU) The trial against 18 men accused of participating in the murder of Hrant Dink began on July 2, 2007 in Istanbul (Ref A). Eighteen-year old gunman Ogun Samast, as well as Trabzon residents Erhan Tuncel and Yasin Hayal, are among those being tried as the main actors in the murder. The last hearing occurred on January 26 and ended in a fist fight between Tuncel and Hayal. Concurrent with the murder trial in Istanbul, investigations and several trials also took place in Trabzon and Samsun to determine the complicity of security officials in the plot. A report by the Prime Minister's office on December 2, 2008 found that the "Directorate for Security arguably failed in its duty by neglecting to place Dink under protection." The same report recommended that Ankara head of general intelligence Ramazan Akyurek be investigated. Akyurek who was Chief of police in Trabzon prior to Dink's murder had reportedly agreed to allow Erhan Tuncel to work as a police informer. The PM's report accuses Akyurek of failing to ensure there was sufficient

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follow-up to the information he was given and of failing to coordinate the efforts of security services so that Dink would be protected.

¶6. (SBU) On June 27, 2008, the Istanbul regional administrative court barred any investigation of Istanbul police chief Celattin Cerrah and seven other officials, including intelligence chief Ahmet Ilhan Guler. The Dink family lawyers have brought three complaints before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) and a complaint before the Turkish High Council for the Judiciary against the three judges who banned the judicial proceedings against Cerrah and his aides. At the same time, two Jandarma officers are being tried by a magistrate's court in Trabzon while six other Jandarma officials, including the head of the Jandarma in Trabzon, have been charged with negligence.

Concerns with Investigations

¶7. (SBU) The trials and investigations in Trabzon, Istanbul, and Samsun each pertain to a specific and different component of the case and overall planning of the murder. Because of this separation, Cetin and other case lawyers say they have requested that judicial officials unite the various court proceedings into one case. This, they hope, would prevent investigating organs from being blind to the whole sequence. "If the period before and after the murder is not considered together with the murder, then the murder investigation will not reach any conclusions."

¶8. (SBU) Immediately after the murder, Cetin explained, the Dink family and interveners in the case asked that anyone involved with the murder be removed from their duties or moved elsewhere. This did not occur and the allegedly complicit officials remained in their positions and were thus potentially able to present doctored evidence to the court, according to Cetin. She specifically pointed to Jandarma commander Colonel Ali Oz in Trabzon who learned of threats to Dink from police informant Tuncel prior to the murder but ignored them, and has been accused of later destroying or doctoring evidence. Additionally, she noted that police in

Istanbul learned of the threats months in advance but did not investigate. To hide this fact, Cetin contended that the police doctored documents to make it seem as if they had been investigating. Documentation provided by Cetin and a film presentation on January 19 pointed to these additional concerns:

- Lack of coordination: According to family lawyers, the Jandarma, police, and Turkish secret service did not share any information with each other prior to Dink's murder.
- Perceived judicial complicity: The regional administrative courts did not allow investigations against Istanbul police officers and officials, despite a report from the Ministry of Interior accusing the officers of negligence.
- Samsun police involvement: Jandarma and police officers queued to have their photos taken with Samast, posing with a Turkish flag and slogan, "The soil of thy motherland is holy, and it will not be abandoned" on a calendar. Two officers were prosecuted for permitting the pictures to be leaked to the press and for holding the accused in a police tea room rather than a jail cell. Other than these two officers, the Samsun Chief Public Prosecutor's office did not agree to additional prosecutions. Dink family lawyers have appealed to the ECHR.

Murder Tied to Deep State - Ergenekon?

¶9. (SBU) According to Cetin, the Ergenekon trial process is slowly revealing the standard operating procedures for murders committed by the "deep state," many of which bear similarities to Dink's murder (Ref B). Missionaries or other 'controversial' individuals are targeted, the murder is planned, carried out, and then auxiliary participants destroy evidence while the media diverts attention to what the media wishes the audience to perceive. This is how Dink was killed, she said, and the auxiliary participants - the Jandarma and police - have lost or destroyed important evidence. At the same time, according to Cetin, the media speculated that the murder might have been carried out by the Armenian Diaspora or foreign powers. (Note: The Dink murder is not currently part of the Ergenekon indictment. End note.)

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¶10. (SBU) Comment: There is little doubt that the security forces of Trabzon and Istanbul failed to protect Hrant Dink in light of the information they had received months prior to his murder. Without a unified case, however, it will be difficult to find those officers with prior information guilty of negligence or complicity. While a conviction of the accused murderers would be well-received, the family and its lawyers seek to expose the involvement of the "deep state" - an objective that may take decades even assuming the "deep state" were involved. In any case, Dink's murder has helped open the path for freer dialogue about Turkish history, unified parts of the population against nationalist rhetoric, and encouraged a warming in Turkey's relationship with Armenia. His legacy is one he could be proud of. End Comment.
Wiener